

- Hall Casts Vote Against Measure to Give No-Strings-Attached Funding to Bush for Iraq -

- Hall Supported Provisions to Ensure Accountability in War Funding, Begin to Bring Troops Home, and Fund 21st Century GI Benefits for Returning Soldiers -

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Rep. John Hall (D-NY19) cast a series of votes Thursday in support of legislation to bring U.S. troops home from Iraq within 18 months and expand the GI education benefits for returning soldiers from Iraq and Afghanistan. Hall voted against a measure to continue funding for the war in Iraq. Wednesday's vote was the sixth time Hall has voted against giving the Bush Administration a blank check for funding the war in Iraq. "I

remain opposed to the President's mistaken war in Iraq, which has now claimed over 4,000 American lives, undermined our military, weakened our ability to respond other threats abroad, and cost hundreds of billions of dollars that could have been used to meet pressing needs at home," said Congressman Hall. "I believe that we must change course in Iraq, and I cannot support the appropriation of additional funds without measures to impose conditions on that funding and start bringing our troops home."

Hall voted against \$162.5 billion for the Department of Defense (DOD) to fund the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan through the summer of 2009 that would have given President Bush no-strings attached funding to continue the war in Iraq. Hall voted for another measure to establish key Iraq policy requirements to ensure the Bush Administration changes its direction in the war and insist the Iraqi government begins to pay its share of the reconstruction of their country. It requires that troops begin redeployment from Iraq within 30 days with a goal of completing withdrawal by December of 2009. It requires Iraqis to pay for their country's reconstruction, insisting that U.S. aid be matched dollar-for-dollar by the Iraqi government. This provision also requires that troops meet the Pentagon's definition of "combat ready" before they are deployed. It prohibits troops from being deployed longer than Pentagon guidelines and allows sufficient time at home between deployments.

With Hall's support, the House passed a provision to expand benefits for veterans' education. The new GI Bill expands the education benefits for veterans who have served since September 11, 2001 and restores the promise of a full, four-year public college education. Currently, GI educational benefits pay only about 60 percent of a public college education and 30 percent of a private college education.

"This 21st Century GI Bill, like the original GI Bill did after World War II, is going to give veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan the tools needed to succeed after military service and is also going to help strengthen American economic recovery," said Hall.

The original GI Bill returned \$7 to the economy for every \$1 spent on it, and the first two years of the new GI Bill would cost what the U.S. is spending every two days in Iraq. In addition, the amendment provides a 3.9 percent pay raise for American troops to help them meet the rising cost of living.

"I remain fully committed to securing better benefits for our country's veterans," said Hall. "This legislation does much to ensure that veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars get the education and support they have earned through their service."

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